

BT/CT/RAD Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 10:00 AM

Attendees: Julie Nassif, Tanya Swanson, Kim Doan, Tom Coulombe, Deb Carter, Will Lapsley, and Sydney Fuller-Jones

Facilitator: Julie Nassif

Recorder: Sydney Fuller-Jones

Next Scheduled Meeting: April 10th, 10:00am – 11:00am, Room 133

BT/Molecular Lab – (As Reported By Tanya Swanson and Kim Doan)

- Tanya reported that the BT and Molecular Lab have been busy receiving and testing environmental specimens. We received 3 high priority letters last week that were sent to schools throughout the state. We received a high priority suspicious package last night that was sent to a resident. The LRN released new rule out time on cultures which changed the final culture results from 48hours to 5 days.
- Kim noted that Molecular Diagnostic is in the process of starting to sequence EEE. Every few years we sequence a subset of positive EEE to see the evolution of the virus. We will be looking at previous positive mosquito pools from the years 2007 – 2011 to add to our previous data. Hopefully there will be results before the 2012 Arboviral season begins.

Training (As Reported by Deb Carter)

- As stated by Deb, they are having an **Agents of Bioterrorism: Sentinel Laboratory Training** tomorrow (March 14) with 10 students. The rest of the dates for this workshop are: May 9, September 12, and November 7. If any HSLI staff members wish to participate, please contact Deb Carter at X6675.
- Deb says they are still receiving positive feedback from our **Biosafety and Biosecurity: Minimizing the Risks in the Laboratory** class and have several people signed up for our next one to be held on October 24. Again, if any HSLI staff members wish to participate, please contact Deb Carter at X6675.
- On April 4 and July 9, Deb is conducting **Packaging and Shipping Division 6.2 Hazardous Goods** classes. Any HSLI staff that package, document or ship category A or B materials should be sure to be up to date in their training. Deb will send out notices to staff that were certified in 2010 that recurrent training is due. Again, if any HSLI staff members wish to participate, please contact Deb Carter at X6675.

Epi (As Reported by Will Lapsley)

- Will stated that they are continuing to have a lot of clusters of norovirus reported to us from long-term care facilities/hospitals/schools/etc...
- Flu activity remains quiet.
- A working group has been convened by Dr. Katie Brown to discuss best practices for EEE surveillance and management for the upcoming arbovirus season in response to growing public concern about mosquito-borne disease.

- Lyme and other tickborne disease remains a hot-button topic in the region.
 - Will Lapsley and Dr. Katie Brown have been in touch with parties at UMass Amherst regarding a potential research opportunity for Lyme disease. Discussions about this collaboration are still preliminary at this time.
 - Melissa Cumming has been collaborating with MA blood banks to heighten surveillance for transfusion associated babesiosis cases.

Radiation Lab (As reported by Tom Columbe)

- During the informational exchange on the ‘white powder’ occurrences, Tom inquired specifically to confirm that during each of these instances the presence of a radiological component had been evaluated and ruled out by the HAZMAT teams. It was immediately pointed out to Tom that the first responders do perform a radiological assessment as a part of their initial on-the-scene assessment.
- Tom stressed that NIAT, the action arm of the Radiation Control Program (RCP), remains available 24/7/365 to respond to all discoveries of unexpected radioactivity by contacting Bob Gallagher, the “RCP” Officer-of-the-Day from 9 to 5 or through the Massachusetts State Police (after-hours).
- Tom informed the group that Radiation Control and MERL (lab) was participating in a two day practice drill (3/13 - 14/2012) involving the Seabrook Nuclear Power Station. This involves RCP field teams collecting environmental samples, such as crops, raw milk, grass, surface water and/or marine life (whatever our management or FEMA decides) for collection and transport to the lab.
- Sue Koszalka and Tom are traveling to the Concord, NH labs on Wednesday (3/14) to tour their laboratory lay out and their various areas set up for receiving and processing of such samples.
- Our laboratory is scheduled to do a walk through with mock samples on 3/28; and the federally graded exercise will take place during the week of Patriot’s Day, but MERL is uncertain which day MERL will be activated and visited by the FEMA evaluator.
- Donald Buckley has manned MERL during the last two ‘ingestion pathway’ federally graded exercises and our lab track record has been deemed as flawless with no “ARCA’s, i.e., Actions Requiring Corrective Action, to be corrected at this time.
- Tom also expressed that he would like to learn more about other matters of interest, such as EEE.